

Sovereign Grace Church

“Applied Agape” outline

September 17, 2017

Hebrews 12: 3-11

Having discussed the necessity of running our race of the Christian life with our eyes fixed on Jesus and setting aside the impediments to such growth and the entangling characteristic of sin, the author to Hebrews immediately begins to discuss how we are to undergo suffering and persecution in such a way that our lives are enriched rather than decimated.

All of us have experienced unwelcome crises to our faith in the form of apparently senseless suffering in ourselves or in those for whom we care. We do not seek out these crises and are thankful when they end. But it is not always obvious that we have taken advantage of these crises in such a way as to be made better people.

Of course this cannot be done in our own strength...but Jesus has already promised us a Power not available to those still struggling in the flesh. It is a Power that is only obvious in the midst of suffering or persecution. Yet our immediate impulse is not to utilize this Power and rather opt for continued struggle in our own natural powers. The difference is that we can SEE our natural powers and used to what they can do.... but we cannot see the Power that Jesus has made available to us. We must utilize this Power by faith....not only for our justification but also for living the Christian life. But effective faith involves our cooperation. We act, the Spirit fills, and results beyond our capacities come forth. This is the Promise. Today the Spirit, through this passage in Hebrews, challenges us to take this Promise as Fact and live without fear in this sin darkened world expecting good things to follow.

1. Christ as our Supreme Example vv. 3-4

- His endurance of hostility
Jn. 1: 11; 7: 5
- “bloodshed”
Heb. 4: 15

2. Suffering as a Manifestation of Agape’ vv. 5-10

- The Chastening of our Lord vv. 5-6
Prov. 3: 11-12; Rom. 8: 28

- **The Mark of Sonship vv. 7-10**
 - **Every Real Son is Chastened by God....even Jesus! vv. 7-8**
Lk 2: 52
 - **Analogy of Human Fathers vv. 9-10**

3. Where is the Joy? v. 11
Matt. 6:33

4. Concluding Lesson

Questions for Discussion

- 1. Our sufferings are not usually very severe in our normal lives. They are more aptly described as inconveniences or disruptions in our “plans” for the day. Yet these are the real character building episodes that prepare us for the bigger crises of life. What was the last irritation that you experienced and how did it contribute to your spiritual life? Upon more sober reflection do you think you responded to it in such a way that would please God? What could have been done differently?**
- 2. Not only do we experience disturbances in our lives but we are also quite often the causes of other's disturbances. What can we learn from these situations? Are there good reasons for disturbing the tranquility of someone else's life? Are there bad reasons? How do we know the difference? What attitude should we cultivate whether we are the disturbed or the disturber and how might this attitude resolve potential conflict? Can Christians usurp the Holy Spirit's work in another's sanctification? How? How can we intercede in another's life without doing this?**
- 3. What is the difference between discipline and punishment? Does God ever punish us for our sins? Does he discipline us even when we're not doing anything wrong? Why or why not?**